

schools a chance to succeed rather than undermining them and draining funds from their already successful programs?

Proponents of vouchers also claim that the program in this bill is a pilot program and should be given a chance. But Milwaukee and Cleveland both tried to implement a voucher program, and a GAO study of the programs in these two cities found no or little difference in voucher and public school students' performance.

Our cities have tried vouchers and have not succeeded. Our children should not be guinea pigs for programs that have simply not been proven effective at raising academic achievement.

I am not the only one opposed to this program. My friend and colleague in the House of Representatives, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, along with the majority of the D.C. City Council and School Board, also oppose any voucher program. In addition, the residents of the District of Columbia are overwhelmingly opposed to private school vouchers.

Let's not turn D.C. into a laboratory for school vouchers. Vouchers are not the solution to improving educational opportunity in D.C. or anywhere else in America. Let's instead focus on fulfilling the promise of No Child Left Behind by fully funding it, and giving our public schools the resources they need to truly succeed.

MOTHER TERESA: A BELOVED SAINT FOR OUR TIME

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, on October 19, Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be officially beatified in Rome. I say "officially," because in the eyes of so many people around the world, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, she is already recognized as an extraordinary saint. She is, without question, one of the most beloved individuals of our time.

Why is this? By all means, her accomplishments are well known and respected. Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity and oversaw the organization's amazing growth. By the time of her death, the order had grown to include more than 5,000 sisters, brothers, and volunteers, operating some 500 centers around the world. Even here in Washington, DC, we witness Missionaries of Charity on the streets of this city, tending to the homeless and feeding the hungry.

But there is another reason why this woman is so beloved. It is because we live in a world of such extraordinary material abundance, a world that prizes youth and health. And yet here was a woman who willingly and lovingly embraced poverty, and devoted her life to the old, the sick, and the dying. And more than that, she inspired thousands of people all across the world to join her in that mission.

I remember hearing about a journalist who visited one of Mother Teresa's hospices in Calcutta. He watched

as one of the sisters bathed and dressed the terrible wounds of a leper who was near death. The journalist said to the sister, "You know, I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world." To which the sister answered, "Neither would I."

In 1979, when Mother Teresa accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, she said:

I chose the poverty of poor people. But I am grateful to receive the Nobel Prize in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the blind, the lepers, all the people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout our society, people that have become a burden to society and shunned by everyone.

That is just an amazing statement, an amazing testament. Mother Teresa was powerfully motivated by the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, "As you did for the least of these your brethren, you did on to me." And just as Jesus inspired Mother Teresa, the soon-to-be Saint Teresa of Calcutta inspires all of us. She is a saint for all time, but she speaks with special urgency to us today.

NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to remind my colleagues that October is National Spina Bifida Awareness Month and to pay tribute to the more than 70,000 Americans and their family members who are currently affected by Spina Bifida—the Nation's most common, permanently disabling birth defect.

Spina bifida is a neural tube defect that occurs when the central nervous system does not properly close during the early stages of pregnancy. Spina bifida affects more than 4,000 pregnancies each year, with 1,500 babies born with spina bifida each year. There are three different forms of spina bifida with the most severe being myelomeningocele spina bifida, which causes nerve damage and severe disabilities. This severe form of spina bifida is diagnosed in 96 percent of children born with this condition. Between 70 and 90 percent of the children born with spina bifida are at risk of mental retardation when spinal fluid collects around the brain.

The exact cause of spina bifida is not known, but researchers have concluded that women of childbearing age who take daily folic acid supplements reduce their chances of having a spina bifida pregnancy by up to 75 percent. Progress has been made convincing women of the importance of consuming folic acid supplements and maintaining diets rich in folic acid. However, this public education campaign must be enhanced and broadened to reach segments of the population that have yet to heed this call.

Although folic acid consumption reduces the risk and incidence of spina bifida pregnancies, we will still have babies born with spina bifida who need intensive care and families that need guidance and support in caring for and

raising these children. The result of this neural tube defect is that most babies suffer from a host of physical, psychological, and educational challenges, including paralysis, developmental delay, numerous surgeries, and living with a shunt in their skulls in an attempt to ameliorate their condition. Today, approximately 90 percent of all babies diagnosed with this birth defect live into adulthood, approximately 80 percent have normal IQs, and approximately 75 percent participate in sports and other recreational activities. With proper medical care, people who suffer from spina bifida can lead full and productive lives. However, they must learn how to move around using braces, crutches or wheelchairs, and how to function independently. They also must be careful to avoid a host of secondary health problems ranging from depression and learning disabilities to skin problems and latex allergies.

After decades of poor prognosis and short life expectancy, breakthroughs in research combined with improvements in health care and treatment children with spina bifida are now living long enough to become adults with this condition. Yet, with this extended life expectancy people with spina bifida now face new challenges in the fields of education, job training, independent living, health care for secondary conditions, aging concerns, and other related issues.

I am grateful for my colleague from Missouri, Senator BOND who, along with myself, sponsored the Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Prevention Act of 2003, S. 286. This important legislation helps prevent spina bifida as well as meets the current and growing needs of individuals with spina bifida live active, productive, and meaningful lives. Our legislation helps those with spina bifida and their families learn how to treat and prevent secondary health problems which range from learning disabilities and depression to severe allergies, and respiratory and skin problems that make life difficult and at times, fraught with danger that make life difficult for these patients by authorizing the National Spina Bifida Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. All of these problems can be treated or prevented, but only if those with spina bifida are properly educated and taught what they need to do to keep themselves healthy. The national program focuses and coordinates the agency's efforts to educate health care providers about the range of spina bifida issues—including the availability of in utero surgery—as well as help promote the dissemination of information regarding how to prevent the myriad complications of the condition.

Last year, I chaired a hearing of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension's Subcommittee on Children and Families on birth defects, in which Connecticut resident Fred Liguori's testimony provided a parent's